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"Adopted in Andaman": Chamber's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts, Saturday, March 24, 1860

"ADOPTED IN ANDAMAN" CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL OF POPULAR LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND ARTS. SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 1860.

Some persons are born to be discoverers, and others have discoveries thrust upon them whether they will or no. Captain Cook was of the former class, and sepoy convict No. 270, otherwise Doodnath Tewarry, is of the latter. He has had an experience enjoyed by no man living—save the aborigines themselves—of becoming acquainted with Andaman society, and we propose purposes, without his permission, to make that experience public. The Andaman Islands—as that not very large segment of the human race called Everybody knows—are situated in the Bay of Bengal, and constitute an archipelago of two large islands and a great number of small ones, three or four of which latter have been used since the sepoy rebellion as convict depots. The Great Andaman Island, of about 140 miles long and 20 broad, is at no great distance from these; and the sepoys, under the mistaken impression that it forms a part of Bengal, or, at least, of Burmah, are perpetually swimming over to it, and (when they are lucky enough to be able to do so) swimming back again. The extreme thickness of the tree-jungles which cover nine-tenths of this island renders it almost impenetrable, they being composed of trees as straight as arrows, of from thirty to forty feet high, though their roots cannot expand much beyond one foot, and are found twisted together like so many coils of rope. The foliage is confined to the top of the trees, the trunks of which are leafless and branchless. The whole island is supposed to consist of uninterrupted hills of some 500 feet in height. There seems to be no grass whatever, and a great lack of water, there being no rivers, but only brooks, which in the rainy season are torrents, and in the summer are dry. There are no wild animals except rats, snakes, and very little pigs, unless we include the aborigines, all attempts to establish any sort of intercourse with whom have signally failed. We have had settlements—off and on—upon the Andaman Isles since 1791, but no man save Doodnath Tewarry, and one more, has ever yet escaped alive out of the hands of the islanders. The stations which we now hold at Ross Island, Chatham Island, and Viper Island, are the prisons of some 1000 sepoy convicts, who seem scarcely to dislike their locality less than the authorities themselves, notwithstanding that they risk life and limb, and often lose them in their mad attempts to escape. It is indeed a hideous place of exile, unbearable to Europeans, and hateful to almost every man who has ever experienced another climate. Nevertheless, the soil repays cultivation, and there are already luxuriant crops of cucumbers, spinach, and pumpkins. The Garjan, or wood-oil tree, is the staple timber of the archipelago, rising 100 feet high without a branch, and topped with splendid foliage. The wood of the jungle trees is very hard, so that the axe flies off them as from a stone; but they are luckily hollowed out by the white ants, and thereby afford opportunity for blasting. The convict-system is, as far as possible, made self-supporting, and the men buy stores with the wages of their labour; the intention is eventually to colonise the mainland (as the Great Andaman is called) to the south of Port Blair, the harbour, which is protected by Ross Island, much as Oban in Argyleshire is by the island of Kerrera; the distance between them being about 800 yards, which can, of course, be easily crossed by a good swimmer.

There are the strangest mixture of classes among these convicts. Among the[m] . . . is (or was) the pretender to the throne of Munipore, a poor, delicate wretch, half Bengali, half Assamese, who joined the Chittagong mutineers; a zamindar of Bulundhshuhur, who once paid a lack of rupees per annum to the government; and a deputy-Inspector of schools at Shahjehanpore. All are treated alike: all lose caste from the moment they touch the convict-ship, as they can get no water, save from the common pump, or from

the European guard; although in the settlement the poor creatures are permitted to keep up caste among themselves. One of these fanatics, going to deck-side of the transport, under pretence of sea-sickness, cast himself into the sea, and was drowned. In the eyes of the convicts, matters would not have been much better with him had he reached his destination; and on the first establishment of the colony, escapees to the mainland, or Great Andaman Island, were almost literally incessant. Some of these fugitives would reappear after a few hours, or even a day or two, and beseech to be taken back again, which of course was done; but after that period, it is evident from the following narration that they may be set down as dead. One fellow endeavoured to persuade the superintendent that he had been with the natives for a couple of days, but his account has many points of suspicion, and does not tally with that of Doodnath Tewarry, about which there can scarcely be any doubt. His report was forwarded to government by Doctor Walker himself, the superintendent of the Andaman Settlements; and the substance of it—for there are several portions of it unfit for publication anywhere except in a Blue-book—runs as follows.

Doodnath Tewarry, sepoy of the 14th regiment of native infantry, being convicted of mutiny and desertion, was sentenced by the commission at Jhelum to transportation for life, and labour in irons; and having been received into the penal settlement at Port Blair on the 8th of April 1858, escaped from Ross Island on the 23rd, and after a residence of one year and twenty-four days in the Andaman jungle, voluntarily returned to the convict station at Aberdeen near Port Blair, on the 17th of May 1859. He escaped with no fewer than ninety others upon rafts of felled trees, bound together with tent-ropes; Aga, a convict gangster, of limited geographical knowledge, having assured them that the opposite shore was within ten days' march of the capital of Burmah, under the rajah of which place it was their intention to take service. They reached the so-called mainland, and having penetrated the jungle a little, were joined on the second day by a large body of convicts, who had escaped at the same time from Phoenix Bay and Chatham Island. They were then counted by Aga, and found to be 130. For fourteen days they progressed with exceeding slowness through the jungle, knowing not even in what direction they moved. Sometimes their wanderings led them back to a place which they had passed days before. All the food and necessaries secretly prepared for this expedition had been lost in the passage of the channel. For eight days they had almost nothing (the narrator says absolutely nothing, which seems impossible) to eat; afterwards, those who could climb the tall branchless trees got a little of some pleasant fruit like the Indian Ber. Water was very scarce, and only found in the form of small springs oozing through the sides of hills. A few men had saved their axes, and with these the stems of a huge creeping cane were cut, and so some water obtained. Twelve of the party, through hunger and thirst, were left during this period to die. For thirteen days, they never came upon the aborigines, although they found their deserted sheds. On the fourteenth day, at noon, and about four miles deep in the jungle, they were surrounded by about 100 natives with bows and arrows. The convicts offered no resistance, but endeavoured to supplicate mercy by signs and attitudes, which were utterly disregarded. There were a great number of killed and wounded when Tewarry took flight into the dense jungle, with three bad arrow-wounds, on the eyebrow, the right shoulder, and the left elbow. Shoo Dull, another (Brahmin) convict, who was wounded in the back, fled with him, and together they got along a saltwater tidal creek to the seashore, where they were joined by a convict of the Kurmee caste, an hour afterwards.

They passed the night there, and in the morning were seen by a party of natives (a tribe

of some sixty men, women, and children), who were embarking in five canoes. The savages pursued them into the jungle, and firing killed Tewarry's two companions, and wounded himself. He assumed death, and was pulled out of his hiding-place by the leg; but on making supplication to them by joining his hands, they retreated a short distance and fired at him, wounding him in the left wrist and on the hip. He again assumed to be dead, and on their taking out the arrow from his hip, again besought them to spare him, which this time they did. They helped him into a boat, and put red earth, moistened with water, round his neck and nostrils, and over his body and wounds, a lighter coloured earth, and took him to a neighbouring island. This island is named Turmooglee, and Tewarry (being shewn a chart) opines it to be about eight miles from the south-west coast of what he now knows, by bitter experience, to be the Great Andaman Island, and not the Burmese peninsula. It is one of those called in the map the Labyrinth Islands. During the entire year he was away, Tewarry was always wandering about with this tribe, from island to island, or to the mainland, never staying in any one place. While he was with them, he wore no clothes whatever, shaved his head, and in all respects conformed to their customs, enjoying throughout the best of health, save for his wounds. Most of them healed in about a month, except the elbow-wound which was three months getting well. The aborigines never exacted services from him; but for a long time looked upon him with great suspicion, and to the last never permitted him, even in sport, to take up a bow and arrow; they always told him to sit down and be quiet, if he attempted it. When he had been among them some four months, Pooteah, one of the elder natives, made over to him as wives, his daughter Leepa (aged twenty), and a young woman of sixteen, called Jigah, the daughter of Heera. Before young ladies marry, they are considered to be common property among both married and single Andamen; but when they have husbands, they henceforth behave themselves with the greatest propriety; even widows are never known to smile upon the male sex again. Tewarry supposes that he saw about one quarter of the Great Andaman Island during his wanderings, and certainly as many as 15,000 natives in all. They generally live in the jungle bordering upon the sea-coast, for convenience of procuring fish, shell-fish, and fresh water, though some inhabit the banks of salt-water creeks in the interior. All penetrate it for pigs and fruits, but usually return to the coast at sunset. The whole population is migratory, moving in troops of thirty to three-hundred individuals, but are all one tribe, and use the same language and customs. The deaths were not so numerous as the births; from which circumstance, it may be supposed, that the population is increasing. They are not cannibals, nor do they eat uncooked animal food; but they have no idea of a Supreme Being, and go about entirely naked—their coats being only of paint. The trousseau of the Andaman brides is very inexpensive, and the marriage-service the reverse of ceremonious. No preliminary arrangements of any kind are made at all. If any of the seniors of the party think that a young man and a young woman should be united, he sends for them, and marries them himself; the consent of either party is never asked, nor does the wedding company—except when there are two wives—ever extend beyond these three. Doodnath Tewarry beheld five marriages, and they were all alike. Towards evening, the bride having painted her body in stripes with her fingers, smeared with red earth, moistened with turtle-oil, sits on leaves spread on the ground, by way of carpet or bed; while the bridegroom similarly painted, squats on his carpet of leaves, a few paces off. They thus sit silent an hour, when the person who unites them comes from his hut, takes the bridegroom by the hand, and leads him to the bride's carpet, and having seated him on it, without speaking, presents him with five or six iron-headed arrows, and then returns to his hut, leaving the newly married couple alone, who remain sitting on the carpet for several hours longer, in perfect silence, until it be quite dark, when they retire

to their private residence. In Tewarry's case, there was not even the ceremony of the arrows, but without a word being said upon the subject, he was seated by Pooteah, one fine evening, between Leepa and Heera, to whom the chief pointed with his hand and addressing the young man, observed, 'Jiree jog!' and left the spot immediately. They were not even painted (complains Tewarry), nor was the least fuss made about them whatever.

The women remain in the encampment cooking and making fishing-nets, while the men hunt pigs in the jungle; the former have often to go several miles for fresh water, which they carry in large bamboos—two at a time—from six to nine feet long, and weighing from 80 to 100 lbs.; all the interior partitions of the bamboo, save the last, having been destroyed by the introduction of a smaller stick. They also catch shellfish, and the fish that the receding tide leaves in the pools, with their hand-nets. The aborigines do not allow a particle of hair to remain on them, and the females, shave them cleanly and quickly, with a small chip of bottle-glass (the spoil probably from some shipwreck, or lucky raid upon the settlement), of the size of a bean, but as thin as the blade of a penknife; the piece of glass is struck sharply on the edge with a hard stone to chip it this finely. Red earth, mixed with turtle-oil, seems to be the Andaman panacea for all diseases. The whole body of both sexes is tattooed—except the head, neck, hands, feet, and the lower part of the abdomen—by being incised by small pieces of bottle glass; the operation is performed by women on children of eight or ten, during January, February, March, and April. These months are selected because they form the wild fruit season, wherein there is no necessity for the children to go into salt water after fish, which would render their tattoo-wounds painful. The operation is done by degrees, and takes two or three years to complete. White earth (like lime) is smeared over the wounds, which heal in three or four weeks. No colouring matter being inserted, the effect is to make them of a paler hue than the surrounding skin. The women rub the men with earth and water in the evening, to keep off the mosquitoes, but do not pay as much attention to their comforts generally, says Tewarry, as Bengalese wives. They carry their children in slings made of the inner bark of trees, and behind their backs. They cut the green leaves for bedding, and palm leaves for thatching the huts, with a sharp shell called Ota, with which also they sharpen their arrows. They occupy old huts, if they can; nor need we wonder, since four days is a long residence for these gentry in any spot, and hut-building is hard work for the ladies.

Doodnath Tewarry, judging by his own height, which is five feet nine and a half inches, conjectures the native males to be about five feet five inches, and the females five feet two inches; nor did he ever meet with any one so tall as himself. The men and women are so alike in feature, that from the face alone their sex cannot be determined; but they are both what would be considered in Hindustan (says the intelligent sepoy) exceedingly ugly. So healthy and strong are the females, that the day after childbirth they are able to accompany the troop on foot, as usual. The new-born babe is drenched in cold fresh water, and its wet body dried by the hand, heated over a fire, quickly and gently. Any woman who is suckling takes the child for a day or two, and feeds it. The child remains without any covering whatever, like the parents, unless it rains, when a few leaves are sewn, with rattan for thread, and placed around it. The reason of Tewarry's leaving Andaman society was that he might give information of an intended attack by the savages upon the convict station at Aberdeen. He did so—travelling with the attacking party along the sea-coast—and set Dr Walker on his guard but just in time; nor can we reasonably complain of our adventurer's behavior in doing so, although our wretch left

his beloved Leepa, it seems, in an interesting situation.

Doodnath Tewarry has doubtless had his reward, ere this, in a free pardon; and certainly we owe him something for one of the most curious and entertaining narrations that ever yet got into a Blue-book.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

"When Indians Play Indian" Symposium Report, by Ethan Schmidt

The symposium, held on the campus of Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas on November 6, 2009, focused on specific situations in which Native People consciously acceded to white cultural expectations of what constituted a "real Indian" for the sake of advancing their own objectives. Organized by Ronald McCoy (Oklahoma State University) and Ethan Schmidt (Texas Tech University), the symposium was a forum for papers that took exception to the previous scholarship that has looked at occasions when Native People "played Indian" as products of colonial domination and subjugation. Jointly sponsored by the Texas Tech Department of History, the Museum of Texas Tech University, and the Texas Tech Cross-Cultural Academic Advancement Center, the symposium brought together scholars in several academic disciplines, including History, Art History, Anthropology and Ethnic Studies.

Schmidt offered the first paper of the day, in which he argued that Native Americans who visited England on diplomatic errands during the seventeenth and (especially) the eighteenth centuries sought to satisfy the expectations of both the British government and the British public about "real Indian" character. They were well aware of British views, and knew that their ability to embody them could do much to further their purposes. He examined various Indian missions, including, for example, those of Joseph Brant, the Mohawk/Mahican delegation of 1709, and the so-called "Seven Cherokee Kings" of the 1730s.

McCoy brought the symposium into the nineteenth-century American West with a paper detailing his discovery that a war shirt labeled as belonging to the Sioux leader Red Cloud in a museum collection is really a prop that belonged to a Washington D.C. photographer. This was a consequence of a standard experience for delegations of Plains Indians who came to Washington D.C. to negotiate with the government (and were willing to do what they thought they had to do to bring the US government to the negotiating table): they made obligatory trips to photographers' studios, donned their Native Costumes (often times over the suits and ties they were wearing), and posed for photos of "real Indians." When staff of a museum found a picture of Red Cloud wearing a shirt that they decided to put on display, they assumed that it was his war shirt without further investigation. McCoy's painstaking detective work led him to identify many North American museum artifacts mistakenly labeled as authentically Native American, which had been authenticated many years ago entirely on the basis of photographic evidence. Jim Cloninger (Texas Tech University) followed with a fresh look at the Sand Creek Massacre in which he asserted that the Cheyenne and Arapaho thought they did everything within their power to meet the expectations of the territorial government of Colorado. In essence, the Indians believed that they were playing the role that the government wanted them to play, hoping that by doing so they could guarantee peace